

TOWN OF ALSTEAD, NEW HAMPSHIRE
Select Board
Unapproved Minutes for Meeting of December 12, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.
Town Hall, 9 Main Street, Alstead, NH 03602

SELECT BOARD PRESENT: Joel McCarty, Matthew Saxton, Gordon Kemp

STAFF PRESENT: In person –Misty Gratacos, Office Admin (incoming); Kim Kercewich, Fire Chief; Jesse Moore, Ambulance Chief; Steve Murrell, Police Chief; Steve Reynolds, Emergency Management Director; Mary Schoppmeyer, Office Administrator (outgoing); Bobbie Wilson, Ambulance Lieutenant & Supervisor of the Checklist Chair. **Google Meet** – None.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS: In person – Glenn Elsesser, Joe Levesque, Rich Nalevanko, Marge Noonan, Barbara Viegner, Judith Willis. **Google Meet** – None.

GUESTS: Ron Grandmaison, Project Manager, New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT), Dan Primo & Mark Dooley, Design Engineers, NHDOT – 10 Summer Street Demolition project plan; Chief Kercewich- Revised 2024 Fire Dept. Budget

CALL TO ORDER: The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and Board Chair called the Select Board meeting to order at 6:00PM.

10 SUMMER STREET DEMOLITION PROJECT: Mr. Grandmaison explained the reason for their visit, turning the floor to Mr. Dooley to present the project nature and proposed solution. The reason for the project is the fact that the stone retaining wall supporting NH Route 12A is collapsing against the structure at 10 Summer Street. Mr. Dooley explained that after careful study the State concluded that the only way for the State to create a maintainable slope that would support the road adequately is to demolish the house. The State is aware that the house sits within the town's historic district; there are plans to keep a photo inventory of the house which dates back to the 1850's. The plan that is deemed most acceptable is to stabilize the retaining wall, demolish the house and create a slope from NH Route 12A to Summer Street. The gentlemen answered questions regarding walking traffic, guardrail treatment, degree of slope, drainage and salvage concerns. The State will maintain ownership of the property once the project is completed as the lot will not be buildable once the slope is constructed. The Board thanked the gentlemen for their time and travel and they departed.

2024 BUDGET PRESENTATION: Chief Kercewich proposed a revised budget to include a line for testing fire hoses (\$2500) and a line for bringing SCBA equipment (\$18,368) into the budget rather than having it be a warrant article each year. He increased the phone amount from \$750 to \$1200 in response to a bookkeeping error that has been corrected. There was additional discussion about staggering the purchase of SCBA equipment to prevent the large expense of a mass expiration of the equipment. The need was noted for the SCBA equipment inventory (as opposed to the bottle inventory) and arrangements were made to obtain the inventory from Ms. Curtis. Ambulance Chief Moore suggested including sufficient money to replace hoses that fail testing; Chief Kercewich indicated that his budget already includes money for that purpose.

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS: Minutes of December 5, 2023; Minutes of December 6, 2023. Mr. Kemp requested references to the bailing shed be changed to the weighing shed in both sets of minutes. On a motion made by Mr. Saxton and seconded by Mr. Kemp, ***the Board voted unanimously to approve all sets of minutes as corrected.***

OLD BUSINESS: Washed-out glass – Mr. McCarty reported that he has a meeting with Southwest Region Planning Commission at 10am, Friday, 12/15 to discuss the challenges of mitigating washed out glass. **Thayer Brook bypass** – The needed letter from the property owner in the location of the bypass was received 12/12 and forwarded to the Road Agent for FEMA documentation. **Broadband** – Mr. Kemp reported that the community question and answer meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 30th, 2024. **Bridges** – Mr. McCarty reported that the State and Hoyle Tanner both plan to accelerate their activities around the construction of the newly-closed Hill Rd. bridge over Darby Brook as much as legally possible. He is meeting with Julie Avenant of NHDOT as soon as she returns from vacation. Mr. Kemp mentioned that he contacted Executive Councilor Cinde Warmington about the closure and she promised to monitor the situation. Mr. McCarty is meeting with the Department of Environmental Services on Thursday, 12/14 to discuss the necessary water permitting; the projection is that DES will not see our permitting needs as urgent. **Dams** – Two RFQ responses received from two firms from the State-approved list of engineers. We will start the qualifications-based selection process as soon as possible in order to obtain a number for our warrant article. **Town Real Estate** – Mr. Saxton reported that deed research done by the Tax Collector has been forwarded to the Realtor. **M11 L2 adjacent to Town Hall** – Mr. McCarty is meeting with engineers who did the brownfield project in downtown Walpole hoping to get an idea of what water and soil tests to request. Mr. McCarty will report back next week with more information. **Fire Dept Bylaws, policies, & procedures** – Mr. Kemp reported that the work continues and there may be a couple of policies to present at the next meeting. **Community Power** – Nora at the Monadnock Sustainability Hub wants to know Alstead's stance regarding Community Power; Mr. McCarty indicated that a Cheshire County Commissioner wants to present a case for Alstead to join

Cheshire County Community Power. Mr. McCarty has deferred that presentation until after the first of the year. **Village Station Lighting update** – Nothing new to report. **Sign trailer agreement** – Nothing new to report. **Model T insurance status** – The Board decided they are done waiting for the Fire Department Association to obtain insurance on this vehicle and is ready to ask that the truck be removed from town property. **Repurpose Highway 2012 Dodge** – Nothing new to report. **East Station progress report** – The Board asked Chief Kercewich to arrange a pick up date after the first of the year for the barrel of expired chemicals. **Langdon Transfer Station fee** – Mr. McCarty is meeting with the Langdon Select Board to describe how the Alstead Select Board plans to calculate the fee for Langdon's use of the Alstead Transfer Station. (The Board will base the calculation on the previous year's numbers.) **Beaver Dam mitigation** – Mr. Kemp met with Mr. Hancock again to let him know that efforts to obtain quotes continue.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS: Ambulance department – Chief Moore reported 173 calls year to date. **Emergency Management** – Director Reynolds reported that after receiving additional policy samples from Primex and the NH Department of Labor, they have decided to revise their policies more extensively. Another review and recommendation is forthcoming. He has recommended some Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) training resources to the Transfer Station. After the first of the year the Director plans to follow up on the status of existing audits and to conduct inspections of the Historical Society and Vilas Pool. **Fire Department** – Chief Kercewich reported that work continues on the East Station punch list. The chimney was inspected by Westover Chimney and a new cap was ordered for installation later. Water separators were installed on both air compressors. The Fire Department performed a carbon monoxide test at Bragg Lane with the result of 2ppm, well within the normal range. **Police Department** – Chief Murrell reported a successful Tree Lighting festival. The department ran out of donated cookies, consumed 5.5 urns of hot chocolate, and almost all of the chili, corn chowder and mac and cheese. The Chief expressed his thanks to all that donated, contributed, and assisted – particularly Corporal Underwood & Penny Gendron, who organized the event from start to finish. Thank you to Mr. Kemp and the Highway crew kept the burn pits blazing throughout the event. Thank you to the Fire Department for transporting Santa to the event from the North Pole. Chief Murrell met with the technician from Powers Generator service to look at the communications tower generator, and determined that the control panel was melting because the exhaust heat shield had never been installed at the factory. A warranty claim has been filed for that unit. The tech also examined the Town Office generator and could not get it to start. Parts are needed, the Highway Department is ordering them. Chief reported 932 calls to date and noted that the rate of calls has slowed a bit. A discussion followed about how often Narcan is used; Ambulance Chief Moore replied that the ambulance crew uses it about once a month, but this information must be interpreted with caution because medication mishaps are not uncommon.

BOARD REPORTS: Vilas Pool – Mr. Kemp reported that the Bell Tower at the park has been closed for the season, and a safety harness anchor has been installed to improve the safety of the task of opening, closing and maintaining the Bell Tower. **Promotion** – Mr. Kemp announced the promotion of Jesse Moore to Director of EMS, Sanitation and Grounds. The job description was presented for review and comments. The position combines duties from three different departments and begins January 1, 2024. The salary offered will come from the existing budgets of the departments whose duties were combined. Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Nalevanko commended the Board for a forward-thinking approach; Mr. McCarty likes the idea of a full time EMS person on staff to improve response time. **Changes to Select Board meetings** – Mr. McCarty reported that at the 12/6 meeting the Board decided that Select Board meetings will begin at 5pm beginning with the 1/3/24 meeting, and that department heads need not report each week and can send written reports for the packet. To reiterate the motion already passed, on a motion from Mr. McCarty that Mr. Kemp seconded, ***the Board voted unanimously to return to the 5pm meeting time and to accept department reports once a month.***

NEW BUSINESS: First Net– Mr. Kemp submitted a comparison analysis with his suggestions for cellular devices to transition to First Net from our existing provider. Service costs per month of our current cellular plan is about \$300 per month; the First Net cost would be approximately \$425 per month; the new equipment cost would be reduced by half (\$4200 instead of \$8400). Mr. McCarty wanted reassurance that all affected departments were on board with the proposal. It was noted that addition equipment could be purchased at opportune sales moments. On a motion from Mr. McCarty that Mr. Kemp seconded, ***the Board voted unanimously to budget for First Net cellular service beginning in 2024 according to Mr. Kemp's proposal.***

GRANTS: Mr. Levesque reported that he has submitted the grant for the new dumpster that was purchased and that he is moving forward with the MagnaGrip grant for the exhaust scrubbers for both fire stations. There was an additional discussion about assuring that there are no hidden additional costs in the form of maintenance and support as we experienced with the sign trailers.

SCHOOL BOARD: Mr. Levesque reports that the Administration's proposed 2024 budget is 9% over last year. The Budget Committee and School Board disliked the 9% increase and proposed a budget that is 3.5% over last year. He noted that the State revised the Adequacy Aid distribution, increasing Alstead's school tax rate by \$7 per thousand. (By comparison, Langdon's school

tax rate increased by \$27 per thousand given their Adequacy Aid portion.) There is a warrant article proposing the closure of the Sarah Porter School in Langdon due to declining enrollment; solutions are being discussed.

PLANNING COMMISSION: Mr. Levesque reported that he is joining the commission’s brownfield committee, and that Executive Director Tim Murphy plans to retire soon.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Mr. Elsesser wondered if the 2 shipments of salt had been allocated to the one-time Highway Block Grant. The Admin will follow up. There was a short discussion about the new tax rate (\$25.43) and how the increase is partially the result of not accurately estimating changes in tax penalty and fee revenues. Ms. Wilson asked for the tax rates for the other government entities (State & local education, county); the Admin noted that those values are available in the office and on the web. Mr. Nalevanko wondered why the road was closed in Langdon (pole down). Mr. Reynolds asked the Admin whether Mutual Aid number were available yet (none known).

INFORMATIONAL:

Next regular Select Board meeting:	Tuesday, December 19 th , 2023 @ 6:00 PM, Town Hall, 9 Main St.
2024 Budget Hearing:	January 16 th , 2024 @ 5 PM, Town Hall, 9 Main Street
2024 Town Meeting Deliberative Session:	February 3 rd , 2024 @ 10 AM, Town Hall, 9 Main Street
2024 Town Meeting Voting Day:	Tuesday, March 12 th , 2024, 8 AM to 7 PM, Town Hall, 9 Main Street
FM School Board meeting:	Monday, December 11 th , 2023 @ 6:00 PM, High School (2 nd Monday)
FM Budget Committee meeting:	Wednesday, December 20 th , 2023 @ 6:00 PM, High School (3 rd Wednesday)
Next 5-Town Select Board meeting:	TBD – Reschedule in progress
FM Budget Hearing:	TBD – will report next week.
FM Deliberative Session:	Wednesday February 7 th , 2024, time TBD.

There being no further public business, the Board Chair recessed the meeting to allow the public to depart in preparation for a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(a).

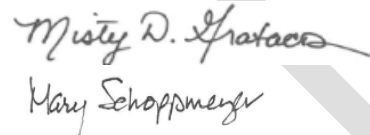
NON-PUBLIC SESSIONS: On a motion made by Mr. McCarty and seconded by Mr. Kemp, ***the Board voted by roll call (Mr. McCarty – y; Mr. Saxton – y; Mr. Kemp – y) to enter non-public session at 7:55 PM pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(a) (personnel).***

Before leaving the session, the Board reviewed and approved the session minutes.

On a motion made by Mr. Kemp and seconded by Mr. Saxton, ***the Board voted unanimously to leave non-public session and return to public session at 8:14 PM.***

On a motion made by Mr. Saxton and seconded by Mr. Kemp, ***the Board chair adjourned the public meeting at 8:15 p.m.***

Respectfully submitted,



Misty Gratacos & Mary Schoppmeyer
Office Administrators